

TRANSLATION:

CHAMBEL'S CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

The artist, who comes from Portugal, creates pictures, collages and objects. He draws his ideas from history and politics.

We stand between half a dozen sculptures, large and small. Broken vessels made of clay or porcelain, which the artist has patched together with a kind of gold-coloured mortar. And then we see lots of pictures, colourful paintings, drawings and exuberant collages. One of these collages shows an imprint, a delicate floral pattern reminiscent of the structure of a lace doily. "Wait, I'll show you the pattern," says the artist, reaches into a cardboard box and pulls out that doily in a matter of seconds. Obviously there is an order in the system of all these found objects. But actually he would need much more space. "I collect all kinds of things," says José Fernando Chambel Marques.

Chambel calls himself the artist, quite simply. A name that fits very well with this charming, somewhat roundish man with the warm brown eyes. Anyone who visits his workplace gets the impression that he can't get past any wastepaper basket without collecting one or two pieces. Especially not past a flea market. Old bicycle tyres, stools, wooden blocks, broken kitchenware - can't you make something out of anything?

EVENTS AS INSPIRATION

Chambel has processed newspaper pages into papier-mâché masks. Some of the headlines are still legible. The artist has stretched the bottom of a red pair of working trousers on a white canvas. A red dot on a white surface. Not quite in the middle, but still recognizable as a Japanese flag. This work, created shortly after the reactor accident in Fukushima, is called "Homage to Japan".

Again and again Chambel takes his ideas from political, social and historical events. He has used Willy Brandt's kneeling before Warsaw for another collage; "Excuse me" is written diagonally in gold letters above the lively picture. Almost overlooked, small at the edge: "You have to have grasped this world to be able to draw it." An object consisting of a withered poppy capsule and 27 light bulbs can also be read as a memorial. Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Amy Winehouse - "They all died when they were 27," says the artist. Of drugs.

Chambel has been making art since early childhood. When he was four years old, he carved a "Flintstone" from a cabbage, for example. "I have always enjoyed giving things a new perspective," says the now 55-year-old.

But it was to be quite a while before he could devote himself to it fully - and his career is anything but normal. Just like his workplace in the back room of the café at Blissestrasse 14 in Wilmersdorf, which he shares with five other artists - no ordinary studio just as the café is no ordinary café. "Kunstwerk blisse" is an inclusive project of the PSD Lwerk Berlin Brandenburg gGmbH, a social handicraft and service company and carrier of a recognized workshop for people with disabilities.

IN BERLIN FOR 25 YEARS

At the front of the café, between 7 and 19 o'clock, around 25 people work full or part time, most of them suffering from a handicap. The works of art created in the back room, the studio, can be seen in changing exhibitions in the café, where they are also for sale.

In Portugal, where Chambel was born and went to school until the 10th grade, he worked in the Portuguese Air Force, in an advertising agency, later in a book publishing house. In 1995 he left Lisbon to move to Berlin, where he worked in the catering industry. He felt comfortable in the reunited capital. But suddenly something went wrong in his life, he became ill. He numbed himself with medicines and drugs, became depressed and ended up in the Bonhoeffer psychiatric clinic. With the help of his art he found himself again. "I am so happy and grateful that I am allowed to work here and that I get support," says Chambel.

PART OF THE ART BUSINESS

One of his greatest admirers is Alexandra von Gersdorff-Bultman. She runs Galerie ART CRU in Berlin Mitte, a gallery that has been exhibiting art by people with disabilities or exceptional psychological experiences since 2008 and is making it known beyond Berlin. "Chambel has been with us from the very beginning," says the gallerist, "I am always fascinated by his creativity, his imagination and his talent in dealing with colours and materials.

The gallery's support is having an effect: the outsider Chambel has long since arrived in the established art world. His works were represented at the Art Week Berlin in 2019, in the show "Positions".